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CENTRAL ASIAN REPUBLICS

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USAID/CAR Bi-weekly Report

Region

Senior Officials Discuss Avian Flu Priorities for Central Asia

Government representatives from Central Asia and neighboring countries, as well as experts from development agencies, attended the Regional Conference on Avian Influenza Control and Human Influenza Pandemic Preparedness and Response held in Almaty from June 12-13, 2006. Officials from human and animal health, preparedness, and contingency planning sectors reviewed sector-specific strategies for preparedness planning and discussed multi-sectoral and regional coordination to strengthen their capability to respond to avian and human influenza. The conference also presented findings from a May 2006 UNDP Global Data Gathering Exercise that assessed planning and preparedness for the disease at national, regional, and global levels. USAID and its implementing partner, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), co-sponsored the conference.



Region's health workers are benefiting from USAID's programs that are strengthening their capacity to respond to avian influenza. Photo: CDC

Most countries in the region have been stepping up their campaigns to contain the spread of the avian influenza virus. However, capacity in Central Asia to detect early outbreaks of the disease remains limited, a concern because the region is at the crossing point of several major flyways of migratory birds that can easily carry the virus from one region to another. USAID, through its implementing partner CDC, supports the Central Asian countries by introducing the integrated infectious diseases surveillance systems and strengthening laboratory capacities to diagnose avian influenza.

USAID Extends Cooperation with the Kyrgyz Republic and Tajikistan to Improve Primary and Secondary Education

In May, USAID signed agreements with the Ministries of Education of the Kyrgyz Republic and Tajikistan to extend the Participation, Education, and Knowledge Strengthening Program (PEAKS) in these countries through the summer of 2007. During the extension, PEAKS will assist the two ministries in the areas of education finance and in-service teacher training. Smaller scale activities will also continue in Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.



USAID's Acting Assistant Administrator Drew Luten co-signed the Memorandum of Understanding about the PEAKS extension in the Kyrgyz Republic. Photo: USAID

The \$13.8 million USAID program is implemented in the Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and Turkmenistan through a consortium of partners, managed by the Academy for Educational Development. Originally funded for three years from 2003-2006, PEAKS already impacts more than 253,000 students in 265 schools in the four countries. The centerpiece of the program is the network of Professional Development Schools that operate as school-based teacher training centers. To date, nearly 4,200 teachers have received training at the centers. PEAKS has also trained nearly 1600 school directors to better manage schools, and has worked with more than 180 communities to prioritize their needs and develop strategies to address them. Additionally, the program worked with the Ministries of Education and Finance in Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan to develop a new model for school finance to help cope with rising costs and limited resources.



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USAID Helps Harmonize Region's Standards and Processes for Accreditation of Medical Education

Representatives from Kazakh, Kyrgyz, Tajik, and Uzbek Ministries of Health as well as from medical education and educational accreditation bodies agreed to increase consistency for accreditation of medical education. The four Central Asian countries will harmonize accreditation by basing regulations on World Federation of Medical Education standards. This decision was reached at a Regional Medical Education Accreditation Workshop organized by two USAID programs, ZdravPlus and the Participant Training Program, on May 11-12, 2006. An expert from the World Federation of Medical Education assisted seminar participants to clarify accreditation concepts, purpose, roles, and responsibilities.

Following the workshop, each country will prepare a specification of standards for further regional discussion and agreement, as well as research how to harmonize the legal and regulatory base for medical accreditation across countries, and then start drafting legislation for it. Region-wide introduction of internationally-accepted standards is one of the steps to improve the legislative, regulatory, and policy environment in the health area. It will improve accreditation of medical education and ensure a better quality education for health professionals in the region.



Twenty representatives from four countries discussed accreditation of medical education at the USAID-supported workshop.
Photo: USAID

Kyrgyzstan

Training for Rural Council Members Facilitates Governance Decentralization

USAID's Collaborative Development Initiative (CDI) Project has recently commenced a series of trainings for rural elected officials in southern Kyrgyzstan to improve council member understanding about their rights and responsibilities. The first seminar, titled the Basics of Local Government in the Kyrgyz Republic, was attended by 22 elected officials of the local self-government body in Nookan Rural Administration, Jalalabat Province on May 24, 2006. For the majority of the participants, this seminar was their first exposure to legislation and national strategies on the roles and responsibilities of local administrations. It presented a unique opportunity for deputies to ask questions about the legislation and relate it to issues that their rural constituencies are facing. The seminar empowered the village-level officials to build a more effective, responsive, and accountable government.



Nookan deputies discussed legislation on municipal asset management and other issues with a CPI's local government expert.
Photo: Mercy Corps

The Collaborative Development Initiative is a three-year cluster economic development project implemented by Mercy Corps in cooperation with Urban Institute and Internews to promote democracy and good governance at local levels of government.

USAID-Funded Entrepreneurship Center Will Provide Training to Business Men and Women in Osh

On May 12, 2006, an official opening ceremony commenced the work of the Kyrgyz-American Center for Entrepreneurship Studies (KACES) at the Osh Technological University. The center is the first business training school in the Kyrgyz Republic that is affiliated with a higher education institution. It was established through a grant and technical assistance from the USAID Business and Economics Education Project. In support of the initiative, the U.S. Embassy donated textbooks and teaching materials, and the Peace Corps helped develop curricula for trainings.



An official ceremony marked the opening of the first Entrepreneurship Studies Center in the Kyrgyz Republic.
Photo: BE&E



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The center will help to improve the business environment in Osh by providing current and aspiring entrepreneurs with access to much needed practical training and materials. It also will foster greater penetration of business and entrepreneurship curriculum into higher education institutions. Moreover, the center is planning to work closely with the Ministry of Education, Science and Youth Policy to develop curricula changes that will encourage universities to adopt hands-on case study methods of teaching.

Tajikistan

USAID-supported NGO Initiates Inter-Sectoral Public Council

To promote cooperation between urban and rural communities and to resolve local problems through inter-sectoral discussion and joint decision-making, the Civil Society Support Center (CSSC) Shahrvand recently initiated the formation of the Public Council in the city of Kulob, Khatlon Region. The council consists of representatives of political parties, spiritual leaders, local authorities, NGOs, media, health, education, and cultural organizations. It will work to promote the development of a civil society, political pluralism, and a multiparty system; address social political, cultural, and economic problems of the city; and develop projects and proposals to strengthen the legal system and democratic government. The council will meet on a quarterly basis and its costs will be covered by the local government administration.

The Shahrvand Civil Society Support Center receives support through USAID's Civil Society Support Initiative, administered by the International Research and Exchanges Board (IREX).



The multi-sectoral Public Council of Kulob held its first meeting on April 1, 2006.
Photo: IREX

Community Halts Deterioration of Homes and Land Thanks to USAID

After enduring years of damage from rising groundwater, Jarbulok community in Sughd Region finally addressed the problem when USAID's Peaceful Communities Initiatives Project came to their village. Implemented by Mercy Corps, USAID's project helped organize a Community Initiative Group to lead the planning and implementation of activities in the village. The community selected drainage canal rehabilitation to prevent the increase of groundwater levels as their top priority. For the last ten years rising groundwater has been destroying community's crop fields, orchards, and houses. However, the government lacked funds to maintain an elaborate pump and canal system that had been draining the water from nearly 100 hectares of land in the past. Despite the severity of the problem, the community had been unable to raise a sufficient amount of money for the scale of the project either.

With USAID assistance, the community and the local government worked together to clean 3,700 meters of canals, dug out two additional water reservoirs, and repaired the pumps. The village and local administrations contributed 30% of the \$13,000 project cost, and in May 2006, the rehabilitation was completed. The repaired drainage system will raise the harvests of fields and orchards, halt the slow destruction of 300 homes, alleviate the rate of illnesses such as rheumatism, and improve government-community relations. The Peaceful Communities Initiatives Project works in Tajikistan's poorest and most remote areas to mobilize communities for addressing infrastructure and social projects which are key sources of tension and potential conflicts.



With USAID assistance, Jarbulok community repaired the drainage system and saved their homes and land from deterioration.
Photo: Mercy Corps

Turkmenistan

USAID Opens a Training Center to Help Reduce Newborn Mortality

USAID's implementing partner American International Health Alliance (AIHA) opened a Neonatal Training Center at the Maternal and Child Health Scientific Research and Clinical Center in Ashgabat on April 30,



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2006. The center will train neonatal doctors in new approaches for resuscitating newborns and obstetrics, a critical need in Turkmenistan, which has the highest newborn mortality rate in Central Asia. The center's opening follows a training of trainers provided to its staff by instructors from the Neonatal Center in Kiev, Ukraine, which was also opened with support from USAID and AIHA. The new training center will support the National Safe Motherhood Program, which is currently awaiting approval by the Government of Turkmenistan and is focused on decreasing child and maternal mortality rates in the country.

USAID Strengthens Public Dialogue on Legal Improvements

USAID's implementing partner, ABA/CEELI, organized a third roundtable discussion on legal professional ethics in Ashgabat on May 25. By bringing together private defenders, government judges, trade union attorneys, as well as representatives from legal NGOs and the Institute of Democracy and Human rights, the roundtable became a significant step in establishing a dialogue between lawyers in the public, private, and government sectors. Both experienced lawyers and recent law university graduates spoke openly on the importance of lawyers' ethical behavior and discussed observance of confidentiality, conflict of interests, and corruption. Participants also stressed the importance to develop a new generation of ethical and skilled lawyers in Turkmenistan.

USAID-supported legal workshops and round tables are the only means in Turkmenistan to address the issue of interrelations between state and society in the sphere of legal practice and to facilitate legislation improvements to eradicate wide-spread corruption in the country's judicial system. Government's support and participation in this legal workshop shows an increased interest in the official circles to address the problem.

Uzbekistan

USAID's Pocket Guide on Tuberculosis (TB) for Primary Health Care Is available in Uzbek Language

The Ministry of Health of Uzbekistan through the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, TB, and Malaria (GFATM) recently has printed and distributed 10,000 copies of Uzbek-language Pocket Guide on TB for Primary Health Care Workers for the Countries of the World Health Organization (WHO) European Region with High and Medium Burden of TB. The Pocket Guide helps primary health care workers to effectively diagnose TB and provide quality treatment to TB patients. The book first became available in all Former Soviet Union countries after USAID provided financial support to WHO and the New Jersey Medical School to develop the Pocket Guide in Russian in 2004. However, as the majority of the Uzbekistan population speaks Uzbek, it was important to make the book available in the local language, as well.

USAID has been actively assisting Uzbekistan to control the spread of TB since 2000. With USAID support, in 2005, Uzbekistan's TB program reached 100% geographical coverage of the country, meaning that every TB patient in Uzbekistan can now reach TB services. In recent years, joint USAID and the Ministry of Health efforts and the availability of donor-supplied TB drugs have led to a decrease in the number of deaths due to TB as well as a decrease in the number of new TB cases. The Pocket Guide will help to ensure quality services and contribute to continuing USAID and the Ministry of Health successes in TB diagnosis and treatment in the country.



The new training center will teach doctors new techniques for resuscitating newborns.
Photo: AIHA



USAID-supported workshops help address an issue of concern to many Turkmen people: corruption in the country's judicial system.
Photo: USAID



USAID has provided laboratory equipment, drugs and reagents; training; and technical assistance to stop the spread of TB in Uzbekistan.
Photo: CDC